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ABSTRACT

Addressing acute problems in delivery of services to rural handicapped students, the document emphasizes the need for relevant preservice training for special education teachers who will work in rural areas. A list of specific elements for inclusion in a rural-focused curriculum philosophy includes: training students possessing appropriate skills to work with rural handicapped; providing relevant materials across handicapping categories and professional roles; cost-effective use of existing training facilities and resources; a data-based curriculum content; training about local community culture and value systems; preparation for a variety of leadership, service, and support roles; and provision for practica, internships, and job placements. Based on research in over 100 rural districts and cooperatives, input from surveys of university and field personnel, and comprehensive literature reviews, an outline recommends a competency-based teacher training curriculum focusing on: the rural special education context; differences in serving rural vs. urban handicapped students; state of the art of rural special education; effective service delivery systems; alternate (local) resources; working with parents; facilitating interagency and interschool cooperativeness; personal coping skills and professional development; consulting with educators and rural peer professionals; and generic skills. (NEC)

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INCREASING PRESERVICE CURRICULUM ACCOUNTABILITY TO RURAL HANDICAPPED POPULATIONS

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RC 013197

INCREASING PRESERVICE CURRICULUM ACCOUNTABILITY TO RURAL HANDICAPPED POPULATIONS

> The major challenge facing BEH [now Special Education Programs, or SEP] is to develop models meeting the least restrictive environment requirements in rural areas . . .. A full continuum of services to handicapped children is not always available in rural schools, and children in these areas are not always placed in the least restrictive environment (Semi-Annual Update on the Implementation of PL 94-142, August 1979, pp. xvi and 50).

A February 1980 SEP Briefing Paper stated that many of the unserved and underserved handicapped people living throughout rural parts of the nation prior to the passage of PL 94-142 remain unserved, underserved, and perhaps uncounted (Sontag & Button, 1980). Data collected in 1979-81 by the National Rural Research and Personnel Preparation Project (NRP) in over 100 local rural school districts verified this statement (Helge, 1981).

Other sources have concluded that rural schools have the largest unserved special needs population, greater incidences of handicapping conditions, and less resources for services including specialized staff, money, and other resources (SEP Rural Special Education Task Force report, 1979; National Institute of Education, 1977; Helge, 1980).

Critical Shortages of Rural Special Education Personnel

Two-thirds (67%) of the nation's 16,000 school districts are classified as either rural, remote, or isolated because of sparse population or geographic location including mountains, desert, or islands. More

than 15 million children ages 5 to 17 are enrolled in rural schools, and the estimated number of handicapped students in rural schools has ranged as high as 1.8 million (Sher, 1978; Education of the Handicapped, June 6, 1979).

The White House Rural Development background paper (1979), prepared for the White House Rural Initiative, found that rural population growth was 9.3 percent compared with only 5.3 percent growth in metropolitan areas. The speed, persistence, and widespread nature of the trend of rural population growth have surprised nearly everyone, and these show no sign of abating. Tax revenues and other sources of relief have not kept pace.

Even though rural population growth has been increasing and a rapid growth of special education programs has ensued, rural teachers and support staff have had phenomenally high attrition rates. The SEP Semi-Annual Report of 1979 reported that large numbers of untrained teachers are providing supportive and related services to handicapped children.

The 1980 SEP Briefing Paper (Sontag and Button, February, 1980), reported a critical inadequacy in the numbers of special education teachers in remote, isolated, or culturally distinct rural areas throughout the nation. The memorandum suggested that there may be as many as 5,000 unfilled special education teaching positions in all parts of rural America. Reports from NRP data collected from 1978 to 1981 verified a severe shortage of personnel. In fact, the 1978-79 study indicated that 94% of the 21 states sampled reported acute problems in recruiting and retaining special education personnel in rural areas (Helge, 1981).

Subsequent NRP data collection and recent conversations with SEP personnel indicate that the numbers of special education teachers needed for rural areas are indeed higher than 5,000. The 1981 SEP Semi-Annual Report to Congress reported that over 60,000 special education teachers are needed for the entire United States. Rural schools are two-thirds of all schools, and many rural areas have attrition rates of 30-50%. Many rural special educators have migrated to suburban and urban jobs in recent years as full implementation of PL 94-142 has initiated openings for thousands of non-rural special education positions. Although exact figures are unavailable, it seems that the number of special educators needed for rural America is currently closer to 10,000 than 5,000.

The SEP Briefing Paper of 1980 stated that rural personnel shortages are the most acute areas of staffing deficiency because special education personnel have not been trained to adjust to the demands of remote, isolated, or culturally distinct rural areas. The paper stated that "the difficulty posed by such areas is not the problem of preparing quantities or sheer numbers of teachers, but of preparing teachers who are willing and capable of teaching in areas which impose disincentives to the majority of teachers" (p. 6).

The problems of inadequate numbers and issues of the quality of training for rural special educators have been highlighted by the demands of compliance with the mandates of PL 94-142. The necessity of moving toward full service has tended to emphasize the extent of the difficulty of attracting personnel to certain areas due to increased service demands, the growing recognition of educational rights by parents of handicapped children, and the increased involvement of advocacy groups and citizens' councils (Sontag & Button, 1980).

In 1980, the NRP conducted a study to compare rural special education programs before and after the implementation of PL 94-142. As this National Comparative Study reported a 92% increase in the number of children identified and served in rural areas, it is understandable that massive increases in the quantity of qualified special educators are necessary.

The NRP found that securing adequate numbers of personnel to serve rural handicapped students was a concern of almost all states, whether primarily rural or urban. Even in relatively more attractive states, a major concern of persons in state departments in charge of training is securing adequate numbers of qualified personnel to work with rural handicapped children. The SEP Briefing Paper recognized that state departments' divisions of training considered the supply of teachers for remote areas to be a major area of concern in their overall recruitment strategies. Although some states have tried innovative approaches to recruitment, the benefits of many of these approaches have been diminished over time as demands for qualified personnel have outstripped supply.

Specific Special Education Training Needs

The training of special educators for rural America has been a concern and need that has been substantiated as a major initiative for the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) aspect of the implementation of PL 94-142. During 1979-80 regional CSPD meetings across the United States, concerns were consistently raised by the state education agency CSPD coordinators regarding implementation of the CSPD section of State Plans in rural areas of their states. Similarly,

the SEP Semi-Annual Report (1979) noted a need to use findings from surveys of rural service delivery systems to design personnel preparation materials and alternate procedures for inservice in rural schools.

Numerous professional organizations (including the Council for Exceptional Children CASE Research Division Committee and the National Education Association) have identified rural preservice training as a high priority need.

However, most university faculty are unaware of successful rural service delivery models. This was dramatically depicted in the HEW-funded Experimental Schools Program. The program failed in its systemic change efforts because university faculty who could work effectively with rural LEAs could not be identified (National Institute of Education, 1975).

The Department of Education-sponsored Rural Conversations Seminar (1979) identified the need (92% agreement) for development of preservice curricula relevant to rural needs. Currently, relatively few higher education institutions offer training programs (or even courses) specifically for teachers preparing for rural service. New preparation programs must be created or current programs altered in order to build a corps of teachers who are adequately prepared for the unique challenges of rural schools.

Although student teaching is an important preservice professional experience in college preparation programs, its value for the rural practitioner frequently is offset by the fact that it is normally carried out in an urban type of environment. Administrators involved in a study by Moriarty (1981) felt that colleges were ineffective in preparing students to become effective and successful teachers for the rural

scene. Knowledge of subject matter is of minor importance if teachers are not equally prepared to work in rural environments.

Questionnaires and surveys were sent by the NRP via the project newsletter in 1980-81 to 750 of the 2,376 colleges and universities in the United States. Universities were asked to indicate specific training content areas related to training personnel to serve rural handicapped children. Responses indicated that although university teacher preparation programs were not adequately addressing training needs regarding rural special education, the interest to do so was present.

Although several universities around the country reported the existence of rural education centers, none of the centers housed a specific program for preparing students to serve rural handicapped children.

According to a 1980-81 survey of professional literature (including final reports of numerous federally-funded university projects that had the word "rural" in the project title), federally-funded projects have not been systematically training students for the broad range of competencies research has indicated are necessary to work with rural handicapped students. In fact, none of the universities surveyed had either (1) competencies which differentiated training for students for rural from that for non-rural areas or (2) competencies focusing on rural special education content.

A comprehensive approach to training special educators for rural areas is essential if schools are to be able to fulfill their responsibilities for educating handicapped children. The lack of appropriate training programs is directly reflected in the NRP research finding that 94% of all states surveyed had serious problems recruiting and retaining

rural special educators. Congressional hearings held since implementation of PL 94-142 have consistently asked what is being done to better prepare teachers so that there will be less attrition in rural special education.

Typically, rural special education teachers accept their positions unaware of distinctions between rural and urban subcultures and of effective service delivery options for serving rural handicapped students. Particular attention should be given in preservice training to the unique needs of providing services to special populations in rural areas--including rural minority groups such as migrants and native Americans.

Special education majors being prepared for rural America should be trained to fill a variety of rural-specific roles with rural handicapped students, parents, peers, and administrators. Preservice personnel should also receive training in alternate cost-effective methods of delivering services in rural cultures.

Special educators in rural areas frequently find themselves being "all things to all people" and must have a broad range of generalizable skills. For example, it is typically not true in rural schools that a teacher prepared to serve students with severe handicaps will necessarily teach only students with severe handicapping conditions. Likewise, a special educator trained to work with children with moderate learning disabilities may find that he/she must also fulfill a variety of roles with multiply handicapped students or students with low incidence handicaps such as a vision or hearing impairment. Training models should be developed which are interdisciplinary, enhancing personnel abilities to cross agency and discipline lines and which increase worker self-sufficiency.

Rural areas differ markedly from one another. The problems of delivering services to a cerebral palsied child in a remote area with no physical, occupational, or speech therapist--where 250 miles exist between that child and the next cerebral palsied child--are quite different from service delivery problems in a more clustered rural area where the chief problem in delivering services may be administrative apathy. It is well-known that any rural service delivery model should be designed and implemented with a specific rural district and community subculture in mind. Personnel preparation programs should also emphasize the need for and importance of this diversity.

Summary of Needs

Rural schools clearly experience serious shortages of special education personnel. Acute problems in delivering services result from these personnel shortages. Preservice curriculum must be enhanced so that special educators are trained to work in specific rural community and district cultures.

A 1979 SEP Rural Special Education Task Force report cautioned that genuine change in rural special education delivery systems would not be accomplished without major investments in time, energy, and funds. The SEP Briefing Paper of 1980 stated that it is essential that traditional personnel preparation programs be updated to include a relevant education for potential rural special education teachers.

Suggested Approaches to Development of Rural-Focused Preservice Curriculum

Curriculum development philosophies recommended below are consistent with the 1980 SEP Briefing Paper described earlier. That paper stressed that strategies designed to address critical rural personnel shortages

should use existing facilities and resources, be consistent with certification guidelines for those to be trained, include a substantial amount of training, and be integrated with practicum experiences.

A curriculum infusion approach (vs. an "add-on approach) is also necessary if already overloaded training programs are to effectively integrate rural special education content. (This has been indicated in numerous curriculum development projects across the country including a predominant number of SEP-funded "Dean's Grants.") The infusion approach would allow ongoing university curriculum concepts, competencies, objectives, and activities to be supplemented by rural-focused modules or infused content with ingredients necessary for rural special educators.

The flexibility of an infusion approach should be appealing to university faculty with numerous other demands on their time since such an approach allows selection of specific rural philosophies or components as appropriate to their syllabi. Flexible rural curriculum content is likely to be incorporated because universities are becoming more an more aware of the acute problems their graduates are experiencing when employed by rural areas for which they were not prepared. (This is partly because universities are becoming more aware of the serious personnel attrition in rural areas and partly because more rigid processes of accreditation for university training programs are resulting in professors seeking feedback from students concerning training inadequacies).

An Operational Philosophy

The following are specific elements for inclusion in a rural-focused curriculum philosophy.

1. Preservice models must provide for the training of competent special education teachers possessing appropriate skills to work with rural handicapped students.

2. Personnel must be trained to work with various categories of handicapping conditions including low-incidence handicaps. Thus, these materials must be relevant across handicapping categories and for various roles (e.g., teacher, supervisor, or diagnostician).

3. Training strategies should be developed and field-tested so that they can be financially supported by states and universities involved. For cost-effectiveness, training activities should use existing resources and facilities where feasible. This includes existing special education training programs (even though they are currently lacking a rural emphasis) of all types--coursework, practica, etc.--and existing faculty.

5. Curriculum content should be data-based. Research concerning national and local cultural needs of rural areas should be incorporated into the design of training competencies and content. Content should include knowledge based on comprehensive literature reviews, recent site visits, and other contacts with local district and cooperative programs to determine effective and ineffective strategies of serving rural handicapped children.

6. Because of scarce professional resources in rural America, training programs should teach students to use existing resources. Cost analysis data should be incorporated into program design whenever possible.

7. Research has consistently indicated that lasting change in rural areas cannot be accomplished unless change models are consistent with local community culture and value systems (Nachtigal, 1978; Helge, 1979). Training curricula should teach students about local community systems and encourage understanding of models of service delivery which are consistent with local community values.

8. Training curricula must be designed with consideration for local community value systems. Students must be trained in alternative ways to adapt teaching techniques for specific rural community characteristics.

9. Rural special educators must work with a variety of handicapping conditions and play an assortment of roles in the community. Training should prepare special educators for a variety of leadership, service, and support roles.

10. Flexible usage of curricula should be stressed. This will encourage more flexibility for faculty attempting to incorporate rural content into existing courses.

11. Training strategies must provide for procedures to follow up classroom training in actual teaching environments. This should include practica, internships, and job placements. Field personnel should be involved in analysis of the skills of students trained by the curricula.

12. Training models should incorporate interdisciplinary training and be designed to prepare special educators to work with handicapped children in the 11,000 rural districts in America.

Suggested Competencies

Baseline competencies to train students in special education should continue to be the responsibility of the ongoing teacher education progams (for example, baseline competencies developed by numerous SEP-funded projects such as those of Altman, et al., 1974). However, many of the infused rural-focused competencies will strengthen existing special education competencies.

For example, the seventh cluster of competencies, "exceptional conditions," developed by Reynolds (1980), deals with understanding (1) the needs of exceptional children, (2) school procedures for accommodating children's special needs, and (3) the functions of specialists who serve exceptional children. This competency cluster would be considerably strengthened for prospective rural teachers after infusion of rural curriculum concepts because they would also have preparation in understanding the effects of rural environments on (1) the types of handicaps to be expected and (2) incidences of handicapping conditions.

For example, students being prepared to work in rural schools should acquire an understanding of effective rural school procedures for accommodating children's special needs and in the types of specialists typically available in rural areas. More importantly, students should learn how and where to find necessary services in rural areas without specialists.

Following is a list of competencies for a core curriculum with examples of related content to be taught. Each topic is included because of a specific need identified during 1978-81 NRP research and current literature reviews. For example, the "state of the art of special education in rural America" is included because NRP studies found that new teachers became dissatisfied with their jobs if they were unaware of rural school realities such as (1) rural schools typically do not include a wide variety of possible placements for handicapped students, and (2) many types of rural communities do not have specialists available for first level screening. Dissatisfied teachers are generally not as effective at serving handicapped children as they might otherwise be and frequently leave rural school positions. (These factors were partly responsible for the high attrition rates of 30-50% in rural schools across the country.)

Another example relates to the topic of interagency collaboration. National studies conducted by the NRP concluded that it was essential that special education teachers--especially those working with severely handicapped students--understand ways to secure resources from agencies outside the school. Many rural schools, for example, have no funds to hire physical therapists or other support personnel. However, if teachers are prepared to work with other community or regional agencies having a physical therapist, they may still be able to secure physical therapy services needed by a cerebral palsied child with whom they are working.

The competencies listed below reflect a balance of knowledge regarding rural service delivery models and skills for personal development in rural areas. This approach was taken because NRP research indicated that rural teachers frequently leave their positions or do not perform successfully because of personal (versus professional) dissatisfaction.

Competencies for a Core Curriculum for Rural Special Educators

1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the context of a rural school and its environment.

2. Students will demonstrate an understanding of differences involved in serving handicapped students in rural and in urban environments.

3. Students will demonstrate knowledge concerning the state-of-the-art of rural special education.

4. Students will demonstrate knowledge of effective service delivery models for rural handicapped children (including low-incidence handicaps such as severely emotionally disturbed, hearing-impaired, and visually-impaired).

5. Students will demonstrate an awareness of alternate resources to provide services to rural handicapped students and skills to identify alternate resources.

6. Students will demonstrate skills in working with parents of rural handicapped students.

7. Students will develop skills in working with citizens and agencies in rural communities to facilitate cooperativeness among schools and service agencies to serve handicapped students.

8. Students will demonstrate an understanding of personal development skills (a) for their own professional growth, and (b) to build a local support system in their rural environment.

9. Students will develop skills in working with peer professionals from rural environments.

Examples of Core Curriculum Elements

The following outlines represent recommended course content related to each competency. These content outlines are based on 1978-81 NRP research in over 100 rural districts and cooperatives across the United States, input from surveys of university and field personnel, and comprehensive literature reviews.

EXAMPLES OF CORE CURRICULUM ELEMENTS

I. The Rural Special Education Context

A. Differences in Rural and Urban Schools and Communities

B. Ruralness Defined
   1. Controversies defining rural schools
   2. Sparsity vs. rural

C. Inequities of Ruralness
   1. Results of federal and state requirements
   2. Problems securing human and technical resources
   3. Implications of controversies for federal policies, availability of statistical data, and services delivered to handicapped students.

D. Heterogeneity of Ruralness--Types of Rural Subcultures

E. Historical Overview of Rural Education
   1. Attempts to urbanize rural schools
   2. School consolidation and other "economies of scale" approaches to rural education
   3. Impact of federal policies on rural schools
   4. Initiation of cooperatives and intermediate education units
   5. Recognition of positive attributes of rural communities and rural school-community support systems

F. Advantages and Disadvantages of Rural Schools
   1. Roles of educational personnel
   2. Rural student achievement variables
   3. Impacts of community attitudes and values

G. Community Services in Rural America

H. Effects of Federal Mandates for Rural Communities
   1. "Add-on" mandates (career and vocational education, etc.)
   2. Infused mandates (PL 94-142, etc.)
   3. Effects of industrialization and in-migration on rural educational systems
   4. Changes in rural community economic systems and changes in school fiscal systems

I. Current Controversies
   1. Decentralization vs. centralization
   2. Effects of collaborative structures on services delivered
   3. Financial issues
   4. Transportation issues
   5. Effects of industrialization on rural America
      a. Class conflicts
      b. Values--old vs. new
   6. Facilities design, adaptation, and use
   7. Roles of rural communities in service delivery

8. Research issues
9. School-based community development corporations
10. Federal actions
11. Policy ramifications
12. Issues regarding evaluation of service delivery efficacy

J. International Similarities in Problems and Strategies of Rural Service Delivery Systems

K. Misapplication of Urban Service Delivery Models

L. Associated Cost Problems

M. Personnel Needs and Roles

N. Affective Factors

O. Rural Minorities
1. Poor
2. Ethnic
3. Migrant
4. Military
5. Other transient populations
6. Types of handicaps to expect--(e.g., Alaska has a large number of hearing-impaired students, poverty MR, migrant MR, etc.)
7. Greater than average numbers of handicapped students

P. Effective Processes of Creating Change in Rural Communities

Q. Rural Community Norms

R. Communication Systems in Rural Communities

S. Power Systems in Rural America

T. Fiscal Realities of Rural Schools/Departments/Class Budgets
1. Likelihood of extra assignments without pay
2. How rural schools are funded
3. Accountability systems
4. How to get aid at the local level above tax dollars
5. Responsibilities for funding program aspects

II. <u>Differences in Serving Rural Vs. Urban Handicapped Students</u>

A. Percentages of School Population Served

B. Personnel Turnover

C. Transportation

D. Community Structure

E. Geography

F. Backlogs of Children for Testing and Placement

G. Communication

H. Student Body Composition

I. Education Professionals Approach

J. Population Density

K. Nonenrollment of School Age Children

L. Cooperation Among Agencies

M. Roles/lack of Specialists

III. The State-of-the- Art of Rural Special Education

A. Problems Serving Rural Handicapped Children
1. Misapplications of urban service delivery models
2. Difficulties in recruitment of qualified personnel
3. Staff retention problems
4. Funding inadequacies
5. The effects of ruralness on handicapping conditions
   a. Types of handicaps
   b. Incidences
   c. Secondary handicaps and effects of lack of intervention
   d. The status of preschool programs
   e. Lack of career and vocational education program
6. Inequities of federal and state mandates
7. Problems securing technical resources
8. Staff development inadequacies
9. Geographic and climatic barriers to service delivery
10. Transportation difficulties
11. Vulnerability of staff/lack of anonymity
12. Resistance to change
13. Suspicion of outside interference
14. Cultural differences
15. Economic class differences
16. Language barriers
17. Rural poor--the doubly disadvantaged
18. Migrant employment
19. Poverty
20. Socioeconomic factors
21. Stresses on service providers/burnout
22. High incidences of retired personnel non-supportive of school tax bases
23. Disrupted services
24. Problems with interagency cooperation
25. Needs for effective advocacy systems

26. Insensitivity of others to child's handicap and family difficulties--lack of community and service provider awareness of family needs

B. Inherent Rural Attributes and Resources for Effective Service Delivery Systems
   1. Sense of community
   2. Sense of citizen-community responsibility/volunteerism
   3. Accountability networks
   4. Informality of political and communication systems/lack of bureaucracy
   5. Mutual roles of service delivery personnel in rural communities
   6. Impacts of community attitudes and values
   7. Multiplier effects of service innovations in rural settings
   8. Assessing parent needs and planning intervention programs

C. Perceptions of Parents of Handicapped Children About Rural Services Delivered
   1. Perceptions of rural school abilities to meet the letter of PL 94-142
   2. Perception of rural school abilities to meet the intent of PL 94-142
   3. Support services for parents
   4. Educational services for parents
   5. Parental satisfaction with services delivered

D. Changes in Rural Attitudinal Factors
   1. Impacts of mandated services
   2. Rural resistance to change
   3. Necessity for interagency cooperation

E. Viewing Problems as Challenges and Rural Attributes as Positive Vehicles for Change

IV. Effective Service Delivery Systems

A. Service Delivery Variables
   1. Ages and disabilities served
   2. Types of support staff
   3. Parent involvement
   4. LRE settings
   5. Attitudes at all levels
   6. Due process procedures

B. District Variables
   1. Governance systems
   2. Funding formulae
   3. Average daily attendance
   4. Power structure
   5. Physical resources
   6. Staff development systems

C. Community Variables
   1. Communication systems
   2. Power systems
   3. Attitudes
   4. Other factors

D. Importance of Generic Skills for Special Education Personnel

E. Alternate Instructional Arrangements and Delivery Systems
   1. Noncategorical vs. categorical systems
   2. Models for serving low-incidence students
   3. Models for serving severely handicapped students
   4. Itinerant personnel
   5. Rural crisis model
   6. Alternate uses of personnel and other resources
   7. Rural technologies--electronic telephone/mailing, computers, satellites, video, etc.
      a. Sources
      b. Uses
   8. Transportation options

F. Generic Effective Strategies and Promising Practices for Individualizing Service Delivery Strategies for Specific Rural Subcultures
   1. Designing a continuum of services for handicapped children to implement IEPs
   2. Mainstreaming strategies
   3. Methods for serving severely/profoundly handicapped populations
   4. Interagency collaboration
   5. Training personnel to fill multiple roles
   6. Serving low-incidence handicapped populations
   7. Rural programming for early childhood handicapped populations
   8. Serving culturally diverse and transient rural populations
   9. Implementing effective work-study programs for rural handicapped populations
   10. Successful practices in securing funding
   11. Building family support systems
   12. Creating awareness of educational rights
   13. Maintaining family integrity
   14. Establishing rapport with rural clients
   15. Influencing decision-makers
   16. Working with rural politics
   17. Obtaining diagnostics
   18. Identifying cost-effective service delivery strategies
   19. Establishing community communication awareness
   20. Adapting transportation systems
   21. Coping with geographic and climatic barriers
   22. Recruitment and retention strategies
   23. Strategies to overcome resistance to change
   24. Identifying and using hidden school resources to overcome problems of scarcity
   25. Providing health and related services
   26. Initiating a Management Information System to optimize school and community resources

27. Using high school students for mutual school-student benefits
28. Interfacing with university personnel preparation programs
29. Inhibiting teacher burnout
30. Enhancing inservice incentives, accessibility and quality
31. Strategies to ameliorate isolation and communication problems
32. Resolving cultural and language difference problems
33. Overcoming negative attitudes between teachers and support personnel
34. Assisting parents in locating and using community resources
35. Developing appropriate communication skills with rural parents--verbal and nonverbal

G. Building Personal and Professional Support Systems

H. Understanding Federal and State Mandates Regarding Special Rural Populations (e.g., migrant tracking system, health records, federal and state mandates and linkage systems)

V. Alternate Resources--Creative Ways to Identify Local Resources

A. Funding Alternatives

B. Rural Parents as Resources

C. Rural Communities as Resources
1. Knowledge of resources existent in the community
2. Knowledge of resources available elsewhere
3. Materials
4. Where alternate programs are (Rural Services Directory, etc.)
5. Creative uses of the environment (e.g., environmental education)
6. Media
7. Mobile systems (e.g., libraries and remote library, other agencies)
8. Technologies--The Source, SpecialNet, microcomputer programs for the handicapped, etc.
9. Linkage and support systems
   a. existing
   b. how to build
   c. the taping system between students, graduates, and trainers

C. Facilitating Interagency Cooperation So Services will be Provided to Rural Handicapped Children
1. Roles of interagency cooperation and rural service delivery systems
2. National initiatives for cooperation among agencies
3. State of the art of rural interagency collaboration at the national, regional, and local levels
4. Effects of collaborative structures and governance systems
5. Appropriateness of divergent interagency collaboration strategies for specific rural cultures

D. Advocacy Groups--National, Regional, State

E. Skills in Preparing Proposals for Principals and School Boards to Improve Services

F. Staff Development Resources--Cassette Tapes for Traveling, Satellite, Videotaping

G. Managing Non-Certified Aides Assigned to Assist in Special Education Classes

VI. Working with Parents of Rural Handicapped Students

A. Understanding Rural Parents

B. Establishing Rapport

C. Effective Parent-Professional Communication

D. Assessing Parent Needs and Planning Intervention Programs

E. Working with Extended Families

F. Designing Parent Education Systems

G. Serving as a Parent Advocate

H. Using Parent and Community Resources in the Schools

VII. Working with Rural Citizens and Agencies to Facilitate Cooperativeness Among Schools and Service Agencies

A. Establishing Rapport

B. Understanding Issues and Processes of Interagency Cooperation

C. Understanding Communication and Power Systems

D. Influencing Decision-Makers

E. Establishing Community Education Systems

VIII. Personal Coping Skills and Professional Development

A. Laboratory Problem Solving Skills--Improving Creativity and Decision Making

B. Effective Assertiveness for Handicapped Children

C. Self-Reliance Vs. Referral to Specialists

D. Knowing the Limits of One's Own Knowledge

E. Being Able to Ask for Assistance from Supervisor/Department Chair, neighboring district, etc.

F. Learning to Find Positives in What is Different and Challenges in Problems

G. Building Support Systems and Mentors in Atypical Places for Rural Special Needs Children (e.g., district psychologist, nurse, librarian, PTA officer, parents)

H. Prioritizing and Finding Agencies for Self and Professional Development to Prevent Burnout

I. Keeping Abreast of New Developments

J. Influencing Decision Makers

K. Recognition of Stress

L. Stress Management and Reduction

M. Alternate Leisure Activities/Self Entertainment for Isolated Areas

N. Developing Annotated Bibliographies of Resources (Human, Conceptual, Technical, Media, and Materials)

O. Comfortableness with the Facilitator vs. Expert Role

P. Rural Leadership Skills

R. Maintaining Community Support

S. Accepting the Rural Community and Becoming Involved in its Affairs

T. Prioritizing One's Energy for Teaching vs. Battles over Community Norms

T. Effecting Peaceful Progressive Relationships Among Factions

U. Socially Acceptable Behavior in Rural Cultures/Personal Profiles to Include Acceptance of Different Cultures, Norms, and Values

V. Being an Effective Parent Advocate

W. Developing Abilities to Teach Independently and Maintain Classroom Discipline Without Supervision

IX. Consulting With Regular Educators and Other Rural Peer Professionals

A. Understanding Communication Processes
   1. Describing the different communication of a special educator in a rural school setting

   2. Using formal communication models to enhance effective interaction with school personnel

B. Demonstrating a General Understanding of Procedures Involved in Consultation and Problem Solving

X. Generic Skills

A. Needs for Sophisticated Generalist Skills

B. Basic Knowledge about all Disabilities
   1. Characteristics
   2. How might a rural handicapped student be different from a non-rural handicapped student
   3. How might families be different

C. How to Adjust and Consult with Others on Adjusting a Regular Curriculum

D. Screening

E. Rudimentaries of Interventions that in Larger Districts Would be Done by Specialists

F. Initial Screening for Various Disabilities (SPEC, etc.)

G. Interagency Cooperation Regarding Referrals

H. Cross-disciplinary Skills/Basics of Other Disciplines

I. Being a Facilitator of Learning vs. the Expert

J. Getting Along with Rural Adult Peers

K. Serving Severely Handicapped in Limited Mainstreaming Options

L. Flexibility/Knowing Where to Find Resources and Answers

M. How to Adjust Available Curriculum Materials for Low Incidence and Other Handicapped Children

Potential Outcomes and Current Related Activities

In addition to learning generalizable concepts for rural practitioners, preservice students should be trained for the specific rural cultures in which they will work. As an example, in a university preparing students for rural areas with (1) sparse population, (2) low educational achievement levels, (3) little funding for specialized resources, (4) high incidences of handicapped children, and (5) no immediate potential for increased funding to support additional personnel

(such as the consulting or crisis teachers who are employed in other types of subcultures), administrators might be trained to function as mobile support personnel able to handle short-term crises.

As services became more readily available to rural handicapped students because of the increased numbers of qualified special education personnel available, rural services would increase. In addition, the NRP Rural Personnel Needs Data Bank would attempt to match persons seeking positions with jobs available so that handicapped students would be better served. The ultimate goal at the local school level across rural America is initiation of a continuum of services. This requires preparation of a variety of categories of special education personnel.

An additional impact of relevant preservice programs with rural-specific content is that educators with training in effective and cost-efficient strategies for rural special education would introduce innovations into school systems. The use of special education techniques such as task analysis and individualized instruction would have positive school-wide impact for all children.

Although a comprehensive approach to training special educators for specific rural subcultures has not been located, a number of creative strategies are currently in practice in some universities having rural service areas. Examples include:

1. students living in the homes of rural handicapped students while enrolled in internships or practica,

2. unique professor-student feedback and support systems while students are practice teaching in remote rural areas (e.g., mailing cassette tapes), and

3. unusual statewide efforts to recruit university students interested in preparing for rural teaching (e.g., Utah state education agency efforts to identify potential recruitees at the high school level and refer them to university preparation programs for follow-up).

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